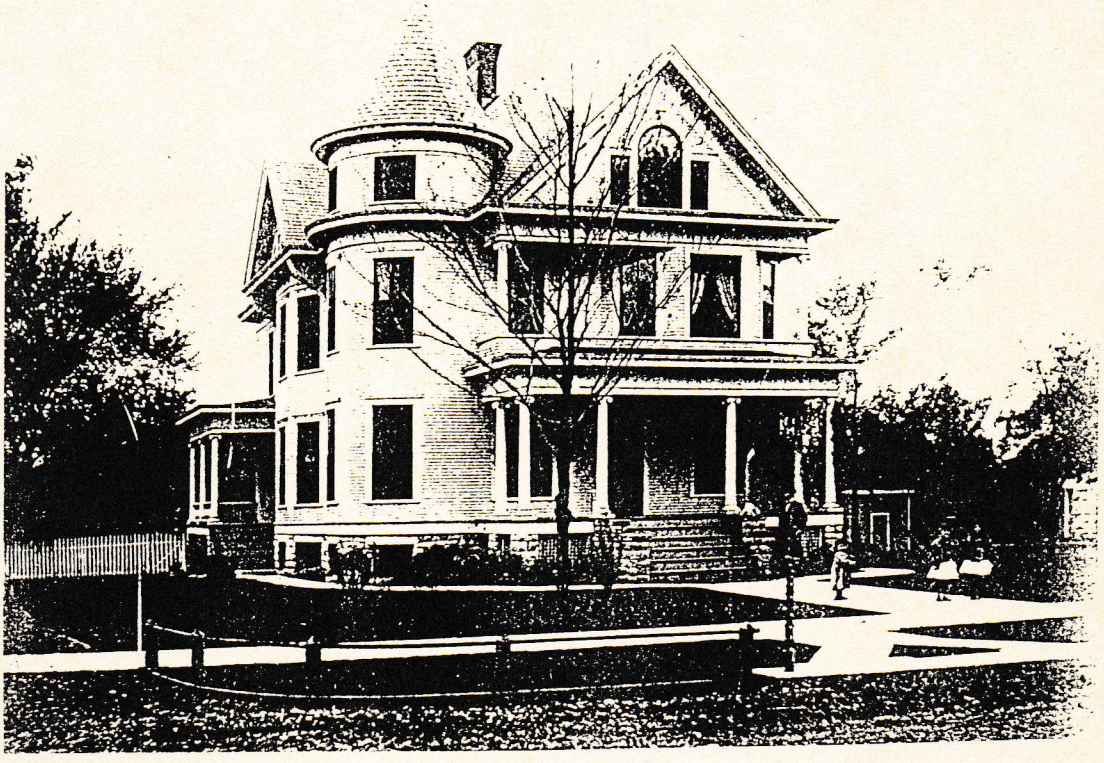
The Catharine V. Yost Museum and Art Gallery Centennial Celebration

1898 - 1998



1998 Annual Report

Submitted March 15, 1999

Catharine V. Yost Art Gallery and Museum
1998 Annual Report

The Catharine V. Yost Museum began its centenial celebration in 1998. Construction of the house began 100 years ago, September 2, 1898. The Livingston County Historical Society felt that this was a significant date for the museum and planned many events to show what life in the City of Pontiac was like one hundred years ago. In 1898 money was being raised to build suspended foot bridges across the Vermilion River. Zoath Freeman Yost served as the City Attorney for Pontiac. The first Chautauqua was held in what is now known as Chautauqua Park Although construction of the home was not completed in this year we felt the celebration should begin with the ground breaking and will continue in 1999. We hope that we can complete the hundred year celebration with the dedication of the new front porch.

Museum Attendance and Volunteer Hours

Museum Visitors - 612 visitors in 1998; 773 in 1997; and 529 in 1996.
Volunteer Hours - 917.5 in 1998; 727.45 in 1996; and 816.75 in 1995.

In May of 1998 former currator, Greta Maxheimer, submitted her resignation. She had planned to serve as currator for one year before continuing her graduate education in New York so the committee had been searching for a replacement. Jennifer Zang took over as currator on June 1st. Jennifer is a Cullom native. She has been employed by Satter, Beyer and Bertram as a legal secretary for the last four years. Jennifer also serves as Livingston County Historical Society secretary. She had worked throughout the year with the former currator so came into the position with thorough knoweldge of the museum.

Museum Activities

January 22 IHR Tour with Betty Estes

Several clients of the Institute for Human Resources were given a tour of the Yost House as part of a tour of Pontiac organized for them by Betty Estes, Pontiac's Tourism Director.

February 14 Daughters of the American Revolution

The Daughters of the American Revolution Hosted their annual Good Citizenship Awards Presentation at the Yost House. During this ceremony local students are honored for their contributions to their communities.

March 6 Curtiss Wedding

On March 6 the Yost House provided the perfect intimate setting for the wedding ceremony of Michael and Cindy Curtiss of Pontiac. The couple, along with a few close friends and family members gathered in the Yost Library and in front of the fireplace were united in marriage by the Reverend James Wolf.

March 14 Down the Brae

Maury Grafton and Forrest Harris presented a musical coffeehouse program entitled Down the Brae which was a celebration of Irish Music. Guests were entertained with Irish music and dancing.

March 21 Jo Ogle Reception

Julie and Rachel Ogle were the honorees on March 21st as the Yost House provided the setting for an open house celebrating the engagement of Julie Ogle and a baby shower for Rachel Ogle. Both of the girls reside out of state and the house provided the perfect backdrop for their reunion with family members as well as close friends as they celebrated the engagement of Julie and introduced their newest family member, Rachel's daughter.

April 27 - Heartland Art Appreciation Class Tour

James Bebe, a professor at Heartland Community College brought a group of students from his art appreciation class through the house to view the Yost Museum works of art. Most of the art in the house was painted by members of the Yost family.

May 3 - Spring Open House Clothing From the Attic

The home opened for the season with a display featuring the clothing worn through the years by the Yost women. These period dresses featured the wedding gown worn by Ella Hartshorn Yost in her 1890 wedding to Zoath.

June 1 - Discovery Tour, Brenda Thompson's Fourth Grade Class

Several groups of local children were given a tour developed especially for them. This tour was developed by Jennifer Devine and is specifically targeted for students in grades two through six. This tour provides hands on activities such as writing with a feather pen and helping to stitch a needlepoint project. These activities help to enhance the child's tour by helping them to better understand the daily activities of children their age in turn of the century Pontiac. This tour exposes the children to an era they otherwise would only read about. It captures the children's attention and allowing them to learn while having fun. The Yost Museum has used this tour for several years and it is an annual outing for some local teachers and other organizations such as area Boy's and Girl's Clubs and Girl Scouts.

June 20 - Hang Loose

To complement the activities at the courthouse square, which included a vintage fashion show the Clothing from the Attic Display remained for this event. Benefiting from the addition of a downtown window display many of the square visitors as well as visitors to the auto show in the park were directed to the house.

June 20 - Drummet Family Reunion

Barbara Drummet and fourteen of her family members were given a private tour of the Yost House as well as the Jones House during their annual family reunion. Barbara Drummet is from Pontiac and after touring the home wanted her family members from afar to view the home. Members of her family traveled from various areas ranging from Chicago to as far as Knoxville, Tennessee.

June 24 - Fairbury Boy's and Girl's Club Tour

Members of the Fairbury Boy's and Girl's Club traveled to Pontiac to partake in the adventure of the discovery tour.

July 12 - Sellmyer Shower

Laura Sellmyer, Jean Losek and Jodi Sellmyer were the hostesses at a bridal shower honoring their soon to be sister-in-law, Mary.

July 19 - Building the Yost House

In December of 1896 Z.F. Yost and his family began to prepare for the building of their Pontiac home. The family purchased the land where North Plum Street meets the Vermilion River. This property was located just across from the Water Street home where Z.F. and Ella were married. The young family had been residing with Ella's Mother, Mrs. T.C. Hartshorn since their marriage because Ella's father, the Reverend Hartshorn had died just six days after the wedding ceremony. Beginning on December 27, 1896 Z.F. began to sketch what he hoped would someday become a fine home in which he and his wife could raise their three children. The construction of the home began with the ground breaking on September 2, 1898. In July of 1998 the Yost Museum began a series of displays featuring the building of the house and a celebration of the Yost family and their activities from that era. The first of these displays featured items from the construction of the home. These items included the original house plans and specifications, checks used to pay for the construction, photographs of the family and of Pontiac from 1898 and a display of tools which would have been used to build of the home.

August 1 - Heritage Days Getting Ready for the Chautauqua

In turn of the Century Pontiac the Chautauqua was an annual event that was beginning to establish itself. The Yost and Hartshorn families annually attended this event. The families would reside in the tent community that would spring up for the length of the Chautuaquas. Since the Chautauquas were an event in which the Yost family participated our August display, in anticipation of the upcoming centennial Chautauqua, featured items from Chautuaquas through the years. Programs, tickets belonging to the Yost children, photographs of family members and friends as well as photographs of John Paul Yost participating in plays at the Chautauqua were featured.

September 5 - Chautauqua Days/Thresherman's Reunion Music From the Yost Collection

A main feature of the Chautauqua gatherings was the entertainment. Music played a big role in the socialization of the early 1900's. The Yost children were taught artistry not only by drawing and painting, but all three were also gifted musically. The family gathered a large collection of music from the 1860's until the 1980's. During these one hundred and twenty years the world changed dramatically and as it did the Music popular with the public changed as well. In celebration of the spirit of the Chautauqua a live musical display was featured. Local pianists Paula Rosenbaum, Mary Ann Knoll, Linda Vitzum, Bev Vertrees and Navana Ahrens performed from the Yost music collection. These pieces ranged from titles such as Woodland Waltz in the 1860's to tunes such as I'm Glad My Wife's In Europe and years of music from Zigfield Follies and Irving Berlin. This display also featured music published by Z.F. Yost around 1870 in West Virginia as Z.F. Yost and Bros. Publishers. A piece from Pontiac composer and publisher James O. Scott was also featured.

September 24 - Historical Society Meeting

In September, a century after construction of the house was begun, members of the Livingston County Historical Society and guests gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion. Mark DeVinck and Paula Rosenbaum entertained members and guests of the society with turn of the century music. A program was then presented about the Yost Family and their home by Bob Sear and Laura Sellmyer. A "birthday" cake, created by County Market featuring a replica of the home was served and all then were given a tour of the home.

November 8 - Pottery Show

Just in time for fall canning the Yost Museum unveiled a special display featuring canning jars, jugs, crocks and other pottery from the Yost collection. These items were identified with help from local experts John Allison and Linda Volk. Visitors to the home were amazed to discover how items were canned in the early 1900's.

December 6 - Christmas Open House

Visitors to the home once again were treated to a musically enhanced tour. Local pianists Paula Rosenbaum, Mary Ann Knoll, Linda Vitzum, Navana Ahrens and Ellen Hoffman entertained guests with a variety of Christmas music as they experienced a Victorian Christmas. In addition to traditional Victorian Christmas decorations the home featured cards made by the Yost Children, Photographs of the family at Christmases past and a special tree decorated with family pictures. A rather unique feature was that one of the photographs was of Z.F. and John Paul Yost placing a tree in the same location and decorating it with family photographs. The most reliable means of winter transportation, a sleigh, which was on loan from Keith Mabis of Pontiac was also displayed on the front porch of the home.

Also prior to this display furniture in the three upstairs bedrooms was rearranged. This allowed museum volunteers to bring down another brass bed for display in the nursery.

December 20 - Luminaria Display T'was the Night Before Christmas

In conjunction with the Luminaria display the Museum opened for a special evening display featuring a collection of the T'was the Night Before Christmas books on loan from Brenda Thompson. The Yost Children aided in this display by making sure their stockings were "hung by the chimney with care" and visitors were treated to a special surprise as St. Nichols (portrayed by Robert Harbin) went about his Christmas Eve business, stuffing stockings, eating cookies and leaving gifts under the family's tree. As visitors traveled through the home the classic Christmas poem was recited by the guides. Then, just after witnessing the three Yost children (Michael and Colleen Cole and Jordon Hibbs), who were of course "nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of sugarplums danced in their heads" a loud noise was heard coming from outside the home. "Pa (George Hibbs) sprung out of his bed to see what was the matter" while Ma (Neisha Hibbs) watched from the safety of the bed." And then, what to his wondering ears appeared, but a rattle of sleigh bells and a thudding of eight little reindeer hoofs, aided of course by Kevin Devine. Upon return to the first floor of the home all were said to have heard wishes of "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a Good Night!.

Museum Volunteers

The Yost Museum continues to rely heavily upon a special group of volunteer and committee members who offer their time and assistance to help set up displays and guide tours. In 1998 these over twenty volunteers helped guide tours through the home.

During late 1997 a program was created allowing volunteers to come into the Yost Home on a weekly basis to work with the museum's curator. Amanda Gernantz-Melvin began working through this program at the museum in September of 1997. Beginning in June of 1998 however

this program began to expand and the museum's list of volunteers began to grow. There are now usually between four and eight weekly volunteers who work Tuesday evenings assisting with various museum activities. The following have assisted with the Tuesday afternoon work program in 1998: Lori Dittmer, Jennifer Devine, Erika Eliason, Kelly Thannum, Natalie Thannum, Amanda Gernantz-Melvin, Stacy Edwards, Amber Ray, James Bebe, Tonya Keefer, Jessica Cool, Tiffany Hulbert, Raymond Koehler, and Rebecca Heathcoat.

Collections Care

One of the most important aspects of museum management is collections care. Beginning in 1997 a Collections Management Policy was implemented. This policy provided guidelines for museum volunteers to direct them in proper care for the collection. Items stored in the home need to be catalogued and placed in proper containers to prevent damage and protect against the effects of aging.

Volunteers have begun this process by dividing items into categories. With the extent of the Yost collection this is an important first step. The Attic has now been divided into seven main sections, Books, Letters and other Archives, Textiles, Trunks and Travel Bags, Photographs and Slides, Furniture, and Arts. In addition to these sections there is also a section for storage of seasonal items, such as Christmas Decorations and a section for storage of Museum supplies. Volunteers will begin in 1999 by organizing each section individually to ensure all items are stored in the best possible conditions.

On September 14, the Museum was notified that we had won an Award of Merit from the Illinois Association of Museums. The award was presented for the Yost House Collections Management Program which was developed to catalogue and perserve artifacts in the museum.

Cataloging

Throughout the year volunteers have started cataloging items including the original House Plans, Artwork, Sheet Music and Furniture. Through this process each item is assigned a number, an informational sheet is prepared and the item's storage location is noted. It is hoped that eventually all items will be catalogued, but with thousands of items in the collection, this is a long range goal. Once cataloguing is completed the details from the information sheet will eventually be entered into a computer and items can be located simply by entering a small amount of information into the computer.

Letters

The Yost Family's collection of personal letters is an especially important asset to the Museum. Through these letters information is gained about the family and their friends. This collection contains letters which date back to the early 1830's. Also included in these are letters written between Ella Hartshorn and Z.F. Yost after meeting in Virginia and before Z.F. came to Pontiac to join his young bride. Letters in this collection written from the Yost children to their parents tell stories about family life and the trials and tribulations of growing up in turn of the

century Pontiac. Letters from Author Pearl S. Buck were also found in the attic. Pearl Suttherland Buck was a close friend of both of the Yost Girls. She was in Hellene's class at Randolph Macon University and was a sorority sister of Catharine's. These letters, along with later letters document the formation of the individuals whose lives are celebrated through the work of the museum.

These letters were previously just placed into boxes for storage. Some were in their original envelopes and all were mixed together with no system to separate them as far as dates. Location of letters from a specific period was a time consuming event. The first task was to separate these letters from the rest of the attic archives. This was done by placing all letters into one area in the attic. These letters where then sorted into decades. With this portion of the project now completed our next step will be to further break the decades down into individual years. The letters will then be sorted into categories so that each family member will have a file for each year. Letters with their envelopes will then be placed into acid free folders with acid free paper dividing each.

Sheet Music

Another archival item stored in the home is the Yost Sheet Music Collection. With the assistance of Paula Rosenbaum this music was sorted into decades by the publication dates. Copies were also made of several of these pieces so that it may be used by pianists for upcoming events without endangering the actual music. Much of this music has now been catalogued and display folders were purchased so that visitors can have the opportunity to see these pieces.

Textiles

The Textiles room has provided us with our greatest challenge. With clothing from each of the three Yost women as well as Mrs. Hartshorn and two Yost men one can imagine how may items are maintained in the textile room. The first step for organizing this room was also to first locate all textiles and related objects. These were then moved into the north west room in the front of the attic. The clothing is now being sorted in an attempt to keep clothing from the same eras together. It is then being wrapped in acid free tissue paper and then placed in acid free textile storage boxes. Our next step in this room will be to complete storing the remaining clothing. As this is being completed all boxes will be marked on the outside with a detailed description of their contents for ease in locating items. Additionally all accessories, such as belts, purses, shoes, muffs, socks and others are being sorted into boxes for storage on the shelves in this room.

Pottery/Canning Jars

The basement contains treasures of it's own. Late into the fall of 1998 a display featuring the pottery and canning jars of the Yost family was planned. To prepare for this event pieces were selected for display. These pieces were brought up and years of dust and dirt were carefully removed from them. With the assistance of local experts in antiques most of these pieces have been identified as to year and its place of production. This information will be used as these pieces are catalogued.

Educational Benefits

The Yost Museum also provides a focus for those wishing to study local history. School age volunteers participate in the Tuesday evening work groups with volunteers under the age of fourteen closely supervised by their parents and by the museum's curator. This program provides quite an educational experience unique to small town locations. These volunteers learned the museum cataloging system and are educated about the Yost family and their possessions. They actually have the opportunity to witness the fashion trends of the past as well as being exposed to the music and literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Shawna Meyers, a sixth grade student as Pontiac Junior High School was given an assignment as part of her study of local history. Shawna's challenge was to learn about and write a report on Catharine Yost. This report provided details of Catharine's life, schooling, family, friends and artistic career. She had to further investigate Catharine's influence on the City of Pontiac. One discovery made was that Catharine ran as the democratic candidate for City Treasurer in the late 1930's. Shawna's task was not yet complete. Not only was she required to write a report, but she had to discover enough about her subject to actually portray Catharine in a five minute monologue.

Amanda Gernantz-Melvin, who has been a museum volunteer since September of 1997 also chose the Yost Museum as a research project for her Project Fair. Amanda, through her volunteer experiences as well as extensive research wrote a report on the members of the Yost family from their births to their deaths. Amanda's project was further enhanced by the use of family photographs and other items on loan from the museum.

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

Award of Merit

presented to

Catherine V. Yost Museum

for their

Collections Management Policy and Programs

by the
Illinois Association of Museums
October 9, 1998

Elizabeth Holland, Awards Chair

Martha Downey, President

Folk Music of Scotland and Ireland

St. Patrick's Day Show

Saturday March 14th
8:00 p.m.

Catherine V. Yost Museum
298 W Water, Pontiac

$5.00 admission
Refreshments will be available

Featuring:
Maurice Grafton: guitar, vocals and cittern
Forrest Harris: fiddle, guitar and vocals

Sponsored by Yost House Museum
for booking information please call Forrest at 309.862.0202 or email us at gump1@ibm.com

Yost House

Spring Opening Exhibit Featuring:

"Clothing from the attic..."

A collection of antique clothing found in the Yost House attic, displayed in the beautiful, historic Yost House

Exhibit open Sunday, May 3, 2–4pm
and Sunday, May 10, 2–4pm

$2.00 admission

for more information please call 844–7401

The Catharine V. Yost Museum
and
Art Gallery Presents

Building the Yost House

Come and join us at the Yost House as we celebrate the One Hundredth year of the House with a special display featuring the original Plans and Specifications from the building of the House as well as other items depicting Victorian life in 1898.

298 West Water Street

Hours: Sundays beginning July 19, 1998 from 2-4 p.m. or by Appointment

Admission $2.00

For Information Please Phone (815) 844-7401

The Catharine V. Yost Museum
Presents

Sheet Music from the Yost Collection

Come and join us at the Yost House as we continue our celebration of the 100th year of the House with a special display featuring Sheet Music from the Yost Family collection. Local pianists will be featured performing on Ellas's baby grand piano music from the family's collection. You will also have the opportunity to meet Z.F. and Ella Yost as portrayed by Jennifer Devine and Jim Wolfe.

298 West Water Street

Hours: Saturday, September 5, 10 - 4
Sundays from 2-4 p.m. or other days by Appointment
Live performances September 5 only!
Admission $2.00
For Information Please Phone (815) 844-7401

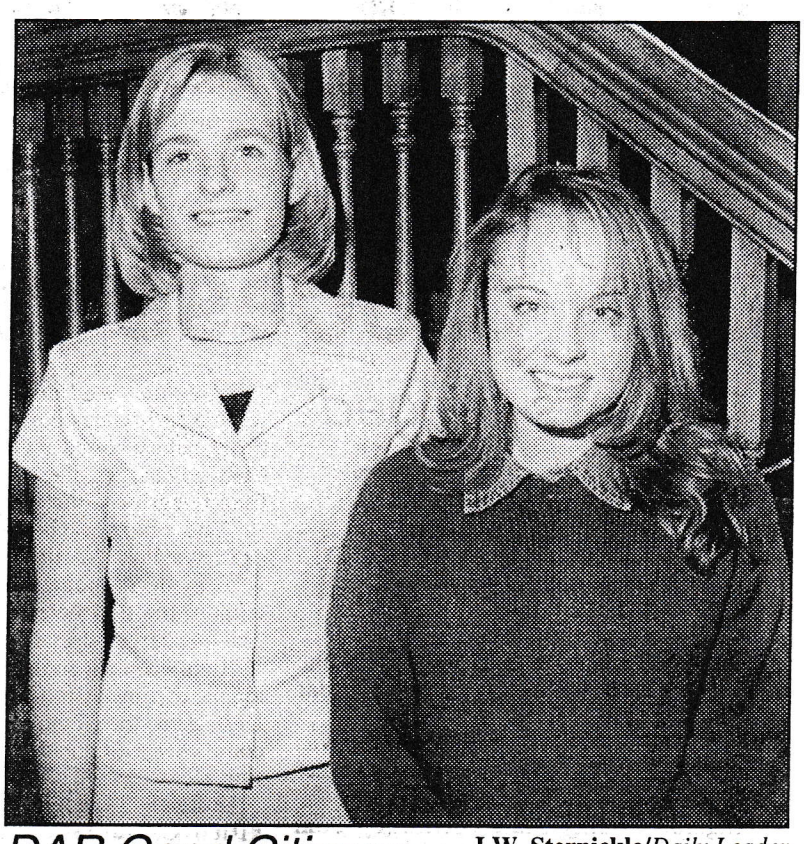
T'was The Night Before Christmas at the Catharine V. Yost Museum

Christmas Open House on December 6, 12-4 p.m. Local Pianists will enhance your tour of Victorian Christmas Decorations with Christmas Music performed on Ella's Baby Grand Piano, accompanied by a Children's Choir from 2-3 p.m.

Sunday December 20, 2-4 and 5-8 p.m. Tours will be given from 2 - 4 p.m. Then from 5 - 8 p.m. we will host our special display featuring reenactments of the historic Christmas Verse "A Visit from Saint Nicholas". Actors will portray the family as they settle themselves "for a long winter nap" only to be awakened by our special mystery guest from the North Pole.

"And I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight, Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

Admission $2.00



DAR Good Citizens

J.W. Sternickle/*Daily Leader*

Prairie Central High School student Abby Schlatter, left, and Pontiac Township High School student Amy Immke were recently presented the Good Citizen Award by the Chief Pontiac Chapter of the Daughters of the America Revolution. Schlatter is the daughter of Tom Schlatter of Chatsworth and Anne Johnson of Fairbury. Immke is the daughter of William and Mary Immke of Pontiac. Flanagan High School student Carlen Roeschley and Tri-Point student Kelly Bantz also received the award, but were not available to be photographed. Roeschley is the daughter of Dennis and Jane Roeschley of Graymont and Bantz is the daughter of James Bantz of Ashkum.

FOLK MUSIC OF SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

St. Patrick's Day Show

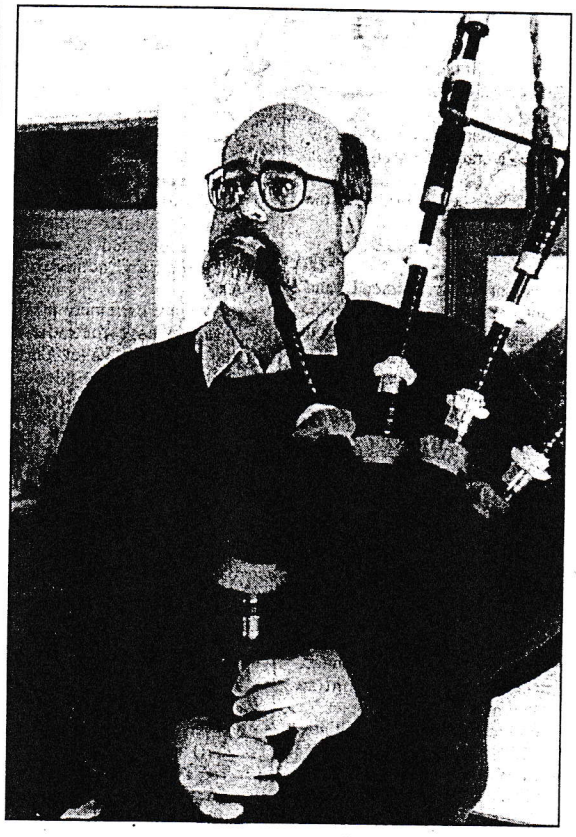
SATURDAY, MARCH 14TH • 8:00 P.M.

Catherine V. Yost Museum, 298 W. Water, Pontiac

$5 admission • Refreshments will be available

Featuring: Maurice Grafton: guitar, vocals and cittern
Forrest Harris: fiddler, guitar and vocals

Sponsored by Yost House Museum and Bill Lindsay



J.W. Sternickle/*Daily Leader*

Maurice Grafton warms up on the bagpipe, which he will likely play to welcome people to the Yost Museum on Saturday.

Yost Museum to host Celtic concert Saturday

By John Faddoul
Leader Staff Reporter

A St. Patrick's Day Show will be held Saturday at 8 p.m. at the Catharine V. Yost Museum, 298 W. Water St., Pontiac.

The folk music of Scotland and Ireland will be performed by Down the Brae, a duo comprised of Maurice Grafton of Pontiac and Forrest Harris of Bloomington.

Admission is $5 and refreshments will be available.

Also performing will be highland dancer Shannon Burnham, a graduate student at the University of Illinois.

Besides guitar, vocals and fiddle, the concert will also feature Grafton on the cittern, a 10-stringed instrument in the mandolin family with about the same pitch as a guitar.

The instrument was popular in the mid-1700s and has been re-popularized by the Celtic music revival of the last 50 years, Grafton notes.

Irish and Scottish folk music differ significantly in style, and each contains much variety, he says.

Celtic music has enjoyed a recent resurgence, partly from Riverdance on stage and also as background music in many movies, including "Titanic," Grafton points out.

Down the Brae came about after Grafton played at the Scottish American Society in Bloomington in 1997. Harris called the group because of his interest in performing Celtic music and the society noted Grafton's performance for them. The duo has performed together since last September.

Their musical backgrounds include bluegrass, country and folk for Grafton and rock guitar for Harris.

The Van Halen-style guitar Harris played translates well to playing Scottish fiddle music, which contains many fast, quick, discreet moves similar to the Van Halen style.

Grafton may also be playing bagpipes — outside — as concertgoers arrive.

Down the Brae (Brae is old Scottish for hill) also performs at The Coffeehouse in Normal on the first Thursday of each month and performed at the Pontiac Public Library last fall.

"It feels like music we're entitled to play," Grafton says. Both he and Harris are of Scotch-Irish descent.

A Victorian Wedding

John Faddoul/*Daily Leader*

Their love of history and of each other led to Mike Curtis and Cindy Butler exchanging wedding vows at the historic Yost House on Friday morning.

Couple weds at Yost House

By John Faddoul
Leader Staff Reporter

The 100-year-old Yost House hosted its first wedding in years Friday as Cindy Butler and Mike Curtis of Pontiac were married in the library of the museum and art center at 298 W. Water St.

Although some wedding receptions have been held at the house since it became a living museum and center for the non-performing arts, Butler and Curtis were the first couple to exchange vows there, according to Laura Sellmyer, chairman of the Yost House Committee of the Livingston County Historical Society.

"I saw the house and fell in love with it," said Butler, who relocated to Pontiac last December. She suggested holding the wedding there, noted Curtis, who shares her interest in history.

"We like older things, and I guess she may have picked it up from us," the bride's father,

Please see 'Couple' Page 14

Laura,
Thank you so much for allowing our wedding to be held at the Yost House – it was a beautiful home & made such lovely memories (& photos!) for us – We really appreciate your help!
Fondly, Cindy + Mike

Couple

From Page 1

Mac[illegible]ledge, of Heyworth, said.

Of[illegible]ating at the wedding was the Rev. Jim Wolfe, pastor at the First Baptist Church in Pontiac. Best man was the bride's son, Paul, and matron of honor was the groom's sister, Christine Curtis-Todd.

Parents of the groom, Harold and Sanda Curtis of Lafayette, and of the bride, Mack and Mary Rutledge of Heyworth, also were present.

Curtis, 36, a guard at the Pontiac Correctional Center, has lived in Pontiac for two years. Butler, 40, is a secretary at Country Companies Insurance in Pontiac.

Butler credited her maternal grandmother with sparking her interest in history, and her mother said that, at least since high school, when she sewed, she's been interested in "anything to do with making a home," including interior decorating.

The Yost House contains the Yost family's original furnishings and artifacts, preserved as when the Yosts lived there. The Historical Society has managed the property since 1990. The city of Pontiac owns the house, which the Yost Trust provides funds to run.

"We want the house to be used by the people of Pontiac," Sellmyer noted.

"The only limiting factor for events such as weddings is the capacity of the house, about 35 persons maximum.

Friday, September 4, 1998

DAILY LEADER

Pontiac, Ill. *Livingston County's Home Newspaper Since 1880* *50 cents*

Yosts to be visual hosts at Chautauqua Days

By Lois Westermeyer
Community Editor

Those attending Pontiac's Chautauqua Days celebration Saturday will not only have a chance to see the entertainment that was popular 100 years ago, but a prominent couple who enthusiastically embraced the celebrations of old.

To give Chautauqua goers an enhanced feeling of the bygone days, Zoath Freeman Yost and Ella Yost, portrayed by the Rev. Jim Wolfe and Jennifer Devine, will be strolling around the park and enjoying the attractions for part of the morning Saturday.

Although they lived in Pontiac, Zoath F. Yost and his young wife, Ella (Hartshorn) Yost, pitched a tent inside Chautauqua Park, apparently so as not to miss any of the attractions.

"They had a tent out here back when the Chautauquas lasted 10 days to two weeks," said Laura Sellmyer, chairman of the Yost House Committee and a director on the Chautauqua Days Council. "When people came to the Chautauquas they could bring their own tent or rent one here. They brought their China, houseplants, lawn chairs, just about everything to make it feel like home," she said.

Sellmyer said the idea for having the Yosts at the Chautauqua revival came from watching Wolfe in the Vermillion Players' first production this season, "Our Town." This is a turn-of-the-century play with characters from a small community. "I was watching Jim and I thought 'that's Z.F. Yost,'" said Sellmyer. In his costume, he really looked like Mr. Yost."

Working with both the Yost Museum and the Chautauqua celebration gave Sellmyer the idea of turning the likeness into something more.

"I thought it would be neat for people to see the Yosts, getting ready and then being at the Chautauqua gathering," she said.

Finding Mrs. Yost's portrayer was also pretty fortuitous. Jennifer Devine was formerly the curator of the Yost Museum and knows the family's history very well.

This is not only the 100th anniversary of when the first Chautauqua was held in Pontiac, but it is also the 100-year mark of the Yost family home, 298 W. Water St., which has been turned into the Catharine V. Yost Museum by the Livingston County Historical Society. Erection of the home had already begun at this time 100 years ago.

Z.F. and Ella Yost will be at the park and at the home throughout the morning until around noon. Wolfe has a prior commitment in the afternoon, so Devine will carry on alone as Mrs. Yost.

In addition to the Chautauqua celebration, the museum itself will have a display and will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

The display will highlight the Yost family's celebration of culture by featuring their musical side. On display will be many pieces from the private sheet music collection of the Yost family, which dates back to the Civil War era. This display also will include a special exhibit of sheet music published by Zoath Freeman Yost in the early 1880s as Z.F. Yost and Bros. Publishing.

To further enhance the exhibit of the music, several local pianists will be featured performing on the Yost piano, a baby grand which was given to Ella Yost by an uncle in 1911. Pianists will include Paula Rosenbaum, Mary Ann Knoll, Linda Vitzthum, Bev Vertrees and Navana Ahrends.

When at the home, the Yosts will be portrayed as preparing to attend that first Chautauqua gathering.

The Yost Museum is a 100-year-old Victorian home which was built by a Pontiac attorney, Z.F. Yost in 1898. This home, which was occupied solely by the Yost family contains all of the original furnishings of the Yost family including many of their personal items. Some of the furnishings and heirlooms were handed down from the Yost and Hartshorn families, and many date back to the Civil War era.

Another historic Pontiac home, the Jones House, 314 E. Madison St., will also have a display in conjunction with the Chautauqua celebration.

The Jones House will feature "Antique and Unique" cookbooks during Chautauqua Days. The home will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The weekend of Sept. 5 and 6 will offer opportunities for nostalgia for visitors to Pontiac. This will be the time to review the past era when communities worked together to cook for men in the threshing runs. There were no electrical appliances to help women prepare the food, no faucets with hot and cold running water, and no air conditioning.

However, the women turned out wonderful dishes with recipes handed down, often hand written, and used utensils that are outdated today. Churns furnished the butter, coffee was made in large pots that kept warm on the back of the stove and breads were kneaded and baked in advance in cookstove ovens.

In keeping with this, the Livingston County Historical Society is featuring at the Jones House a display of antique and unique cookbooks and old fashioned cooking utensils.

The Jones House, dating from 1857-58, is the oldest brick house in Pontiac. It was restored by the historical society and is furnished with furniture typical of the era.

Both the Yost Museum and Jones House will also be open on Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m.

Lois Westermeyer/*Daily Leader*

Z.F. Yost and his wife, Ella, portrayed by the Rev. Jim Wolfe and Jennifer Devine, can be spotted at the Yost Museum and at the Chautauqua celebration Saturday. In the background is a newly constructed replica of the gate which welcomed Chautauqua attendees through the years.

Camp-Humiston Pool to be open during Saturday's activities

Forecasters are predicting beautiful, sunny skies for Saturday's Chautauqua Days celebration. In fact, it is expected to be quite warm — which is why the Camp-Humiston Pool will be opened for Chautauqua attendees.

There is a $5 charge to enter Chautauqua Saturday, but there will be no additional fee to use the pool or to see the Vermillion Players' show — "Spirit of Chautauquas — A Musical Tribute."

Yost Museum earns award

The Illinois Association of Museums is honoring the Catherine V. Yost Museum with an Award of Merit for the museum's Collection Management Program.

An IAM Award Committee has reviewed the nomination materials submitted by the museum and has determined that the "collections managements policy is well-done and well-grounded in your inventory and Conservation process." This award is a noncompetitive award which means each entrant is judged on its own merits, rather than competing against other museums in its category.

The Yost Museum is owned by the city of Pontiac and managed by the Livingston County Historical Society. Persons interested in information regarding volunteer opportunities at the museum may contact the museum's curator, Jennifer Zang, at 815-844-7401.

Yost House Museum to celebrate 100th year with special display

A special display will be featured at the Yost House Museum, 298 W. Water St., beginning Sunday, July 19, in honor of the historic building's 100 year.

The display will include original plans and specifications from the building of the Yost House as well as other items depicting Victorian life in 1898.

The Yost House Museum will be open Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. and other days by appointment. Admission is $2. For more information, call 844-7401.

Yost Museum still featuring historic display

The Yost House Museum, 298 W. Water St., is featuring a special display in honor of the historic building's 100th year.

The display includes original plans and specifications from the building of the Yost House. This display will continue to Aug. 30. A new display will begin for Labor Day weekend. The museum is open Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. and other days by appointment. Admission is $2. For more information, call 844-7401.

Catherine Yost Museum receives merit award

The Catherine V. Yost Museum in Pontiac received an award of merit in the promotional and informational material category at the Illinois Association of Museums (IAM) Fall Conference in Rockford Oct. 8-10.

The non-competitive award of merit recognized the collections management policy and program at the Yost Museum, 298 W. Water St.

IAM is an independent, statewide organization of museums and historical societies which operates with support from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Yost Museum anniversary displays tie in with annual Chautauqua Days

By M.K. GUETERSLOH
Pontiac bureau chief

PONTIAC — A series of displays that celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Catharine V. Yost Museum will open to coincide with Pontiac's 100-year celebration of chautauqua festivals.

The first display, which will focus on the construction of the Victorian home, will open Sept. 5 and will lead to a display about the Yost Family's celebration of culture that features their musical side.

On display will be many pieces from the private sheet music collection of the Yost family, which dates back to the Civil War era. The display will include a special exhibit of sheet music published by Zoath Freeman Yost in the early 1880s. Several local pianists will be featured performing on the Yost piano, a baby grand given to Ella Yost by an uncle in 1911.

Additionally, visitors to both the Yost Home and to the Sept. 5-6 Chautauqua Days will be given a chance to meet Zoath Freeman Yost and his young wife, Ella. Historical interpreters will portray the Yosts as they prepare for their departure to the chautauqua and will travel to Chautauqua Park for the weekend's events just as the family did during Pontiac's first chautauqua in 1898.

The Yost Museum is a 100-year-old Victorian home which was built by Pontiac attorney Z.F. Yost in 1898. This home, which was occupied solely by the Yost family, contains all of the original furnishings of the family, including many of their personal items. Some of the furnishings and heirlooms were handed down from the Yost family and many date back to the 1860s.

For information regarding the Yost Museum or for tour information, call the museum at (815) 844-7401.

FLASHBACK: Time stands still at the Yost House

Susan Rittenhouse

As a child, I was an incredible pack rat. To my parents' dismay, I kept everything. Things I should have thrown away: outdated magazines, worn hats, baby teeth.

I kept hanging on to my precious possessions for posterity's sake. About in my mid-20s, I became a cleaner and tossed everything into the garbage. Unfortunately, today some of the things I threw out are considered antiques or of historical value, and I wish I'd kept them.

This is a dilemma the Yost family of Pontiac never faced. The five members of the Yost household, all deceased, were notorious savers. And fortunately for us, the relics of their past, saved in mint condition by the family, are part of the Yost House legacy.

The Yost House celebrated its 100th birthday last week. A pretty large crowd gathered in its parlor to commemorate the occasion, complete with piano playing, singing and a birthday cake decorated with the house's image. So many interested people showed up that the chair supply ran short.

Here's how the story goes: In September 1898, a Pontiac attorney named Z.F. Yost contracted for the construction of a three-story Queen Anne-style house along the north Vermillion River bank, just west of the Mill Street bridge. You know the house; it has changed remarkably little in 100 years. The family, two parents and three children, were well educated and had a flair for the arts. The three children never married, all residing in the house until their deaths.

The last survivor, J. Paul Yost, also an attorney, died in 1988. He bequeathed the house and its contents to the city of Pontiac to be preserved as a living record of sorts and a tribute to Pontiac's past. The Yost Trust was formed; its five members are Mary Dievendorf, John Purnell, Ron Fellheimer, Faraday Strock and Bob Sear. The city owns the Yost House, and it is operated by the Livingston County Historical Society. Bills generated by the home are paid by the trust and any income generated by the museum itself.

"The Yost House has been open for eight years and it gets better every year," said Sear, also president of the historical society.

When I tell you that the Yost House looks exactly the same as it has for the past century, I'm not joking. Walk through the front door of this home and you walk back into time. The woodwork, furnishings and paintings are original. Peer into the china cabinet and you'll find wedding presents to the Yosts, who were married in 1890, with the gift tags still remaining. Walk upstairs to the bedrooms and you'll find all their clothes, hair combs, aspirin boxes, even facial cream. Toys from their early childhoods are still in prime condition, as well as dozens of books and phonograph records.

"This is a complete history of how a family lived during the early 20th century," said Sear. "People who have grown up here take this kind of history for granted. People who move here are amazed at the detail."

Even the most ordinary of items, such as sales receipts or newspapers, give an extraordinary view of the life Pontiac residents lived in the early 1900s.

Jenny Zang is the curator of the museum and lives at the house.

"It's really neat living here," she said. "I never know what I am going to find when I open a box or a closet." Jenny's job is to set up displays and exhibits and to give tours to the roughly 800 people who visit every year.

With the exception of Jenny's room, the Yost House is preserved exactly as the family left it. The plumbing has been updated, but the heating system is the same unit used by Paul Yost.

I asked Jenny if it bothered her to live in someone else's home, surrounded by all their possessions. It seemed a little spooky to me.

"No, there are no ghosts here. I am really interested in history and I like it. And no, I don't sit on their furniture ... All of (the home's contents) were theirs and I get a real feeling of what this family was all about. They were artistic, quiet and loyal. They were close-knit."

In the attic are boxes and boxes of treasures yet to be discovered. Jenny and volunteers sort through and catalog items on a regular basis. There are Christmas ornaments, sheet music, cashmere soap, trunks filled with letters, seashells, bread boxes, a buggy and a bicycle.

The Yosts kept everything.

"And we are glad they did," said Sear. "Having this museum is absolutely the best use of this house and these belongings. It is such an important part of our history."

Susan Rittenhouse's column appears every Wednesday. Write to her in care of The Pantagraph, 301 W. Washington St., Bloomington, IL 61702-2907.

Celebration to mark Yost home's 100th year

By Pantagraph staff

PONTIAC — Antique blueprints and yellowed invoices that specify how the city's Catherine V. Yost Museum was constructed will be featured during a Centennial Birthday Open House at 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

The celebration hosted by the Livingston County Historical Society will commemorate the September 1898 groundbreaking of the house built at 298 W. Water St. that was once the home of Pontiac attorney Zoath Freeman Yost.

Museum curator Jenny Zang said there will be a number of displays regarding the construction of the home as well as entertainment and a lecture. After a brief business meeting for the historical society, guests will be served cake and entertained with turn-of-the century tunes from the baby grand piano played by local pianist Paula Rosenbaum.

Also featured during the open house will be a brief lecture on the history of the house and the Yosts by historical society member Laura Sellmyer.

In addition to examining the museum's original floor plan, antiquated specifications drawn up by Miller & Fisher Architects of Bloomington and other 100-year-old papers, visitors may tour the house which has seen few changes in the past century.

The free classic Queen Anne-style structure was constructed as a private residence for the Yost family and, according to Zang, records written by Yost indicate he spent $8,000 to construct and furnish the home.

Furnishings included $100 worth of plumbing for 10 rooms, which included a footed bathtub, a $330 Italian marble sink and a $235 coal furnace system.

Zang said of the items listed in Yost's records, the tub and the sink are among the few details replaced by the family.

"The cracked sink is still on site. Of course it's hidden away in the basement," Zang said adding that the sink is a testimony to the saving ways of the Yost family that eventually provided Pontiac with "a clear and complete picture of turn-of-the-century life."

The family occupied the home until 1988 when J. Paul Yost, the youngest of the three children, died leaving the home to the city to operate as a museum.

Yost House Museum holding special display Thursday

The Catharine V. Yost Museum will be hosting a special display Thursday in honor of the 100th anniversary of the building of the Yost home.

The special display begins at 7:30 p.m. and will include free admission, tours, live music and refreshments at the museum, 298 W. Water St.

Visitors can find a fireplace mantle complete with fluted columns, intricate carving and a beveled mirror, which cost $100. The mantle's price is found among the 100-year-old papers displayed as part of the museum's Centennial Birthday Open House.

Marking the anniversary of the house museum's September 1898 ground-breaking at its Water Street site, the Livingston County Historical Society is hosting its monthly meeting at the house and waiving admission for the evening's visitors.

Following a brief business meeting, guests will be served cake and entertained with turn-of-the-century tunes from the baby grand piano played by Paula Rosenbaum.

In addition to examining the museum's original floor plan, antiquated specifications drawn up by Miller & Fisher Architects of Bloomington and other building related artifacts, visitors may tour the house, taking in architectural details little changed through the years and a colorful display of sheet music dating from 1860, instruments and period clothing.

This is a photograph of the then newly constructed Yost House in 1898.

The Free Classic Queen Anne-style structure was constructed as a private residence for a young lawyer named Zoath Freeman Yost, his wife Ella and their three children. A yellowed note in Yost's own hand writing says he spent approximately $8,000 building and outfitting the house. Further study of the note shows Yost acquired 10-room worth of hardware for $100, plumbing including a footed bathtub and an Italian marble sink for $330 and a coal furnace system for $235. Of 17 items enumerated in the note, the tub and sink are among the few details replaced by the family.

The museum's curator Jenny Zang said, "The cracked sink is still on site, of course, hidden away in the basement," a testimony to saving ways that eventually provided Pontiac with "a clear and complete picture of turn-of-the-century life."

The family occupied the home until 1988 when J. Paul Yost, the youngest of the children, died, leaving the home to the city to operate as a museum. The city has allowed the historical society to manage the property which attracts about 600 visitors annually. Maintenance and operating expenses are covered through a $6,000 annual donation from the Yost Trust and other donations.

Throughout the event, Zang will be available to answer questions regarding volunteer opportunities within the museum.

Yost Museum has regular hours each Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. or other days by appointment. Admission is $2. For more information, call 844-7401.

Yost Museum will feature 'Night Before Christmas' this Sunday

It will be "The Night Before Christmas" early as the Catharine V. Yost Museum, 298 W. Water St., brings the classic poem to life from 5 to 8 p.m. Sunday, during Pontiac's citywide luminaria display.

Visitors to the circa 1898 house museum will find Mama and Papa, portrayed by George and Neisha Hibbs of Pontiac, settling in for a long winter's nap. The children, played by Jordan Hibbs, Colleen Cole and Michael Cole, all of Pontiac, will be nestled in their beds or somewhere close by; while Santa, played by Robert Reichert of Park Forest, makes his appearance downstairs. Even Santa's magic sleigh, loaned by Keith Mabis of rural Pontiac, will be parked on the home's front porch.

In the library and throughout the house, more than 20 illustrator's interpretations of Clement C. Moore's most famous work will be displayed amongst decorations that make the house museum a character in its own right. These special books are on loan to the museum by Brenda Thompson of Pontiac.

The museum and book collection also will be available for viewing from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday afternoon.

PONTIAC, Historic Jones House, 318 E. Madison St. will be closed today. It will reopen for Christmas Season with open house Dec. 6, noon to 4 p.m. It will also be open Dec. 13 and 27, 2 to 4 p.m., Dec. 20, 2 to 4 and 5 to 8 p.m. before closing until spring.

PONTIAC, Catharine V. Yost Museum, 298 W. Water St., will be closed today for Christmas decorating. Will reopen Dec. 6, noon to 4 p.m. for Christmas Open House, featuring live music by area residents. Museum will be open Dec. 13 & 27, 2 to 4 p.m.; Dec. 20, 2 to 4 p.m. and 5 to 8 p.m., before closing season until May.

Yost Museum has pottery exhibition

A pottery exhibit at the Catherine V. Yost Museum in Pontiac will continue on display through Sunday, Nov. 22.

The exhibit features crocks, canning jars, jugs, bottles and other pottery belonging to the Yost Family.

Museum staff members have worked closely with two area residents, John Allison and Linda Volk, who are knowledgeable of antiques. Allison and Volk assisted staff members by identifying the types and ages of the pottery, as well as the locations where they originated and the companies which manufactured them.

The museum is open Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. or by appointment. To schedule an appointment, please telephone the curator at 844-7401.

The display opened Nov. 8.

PONTIAC

Holiday open houses slated this weekend

Special holiday open houses and displays of decorations will be held at the Catherine V. Yost Museum and the Jones House this weekend.

The Yost Museum, 298 W. Water St., open from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, will feature historically correct Victorian Christmas decorations as well as decorations pertaining to the classic Christmas verse, "A Visit from Saint Nicholas."

Local pianists Mary Ann Knoll, Navanna Ahrens, Paula Rosenbaum and Ellen Hoffman will be featured performing Christmas music. A children's choir from St. Mary's School will be performing with Rosenbaum from 2 to 3 p.m.

The Jones House, 314 E. Madison St., will be celebrating its 12th Christmas open house from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. The house will be decorated by Holiday House, Kim's Floral Gallery and Pontiac Greenhouse. Refreshments will be served.

The Yost Museum and Jones House will be open 2 to 4 p.m. Dec. 13 and Dec. 20 with special open house hours from 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 20 in conjunction with the citywide luminaria display.

Open houses set for Sunday

Local historic sites, the Jones House and the Catharine V. Yost Museum, are celebrating the holiday season with open houses this Sunday.

The 12th annual Christmas Open House at the Jones House, 314 E. Madison St., will be held from 1 to 4 p.m.

The house will be decorated by Holiday House, Kim's Floral Gallery and Pontiac Greenhouse. Refreshments will be served.

Mrs. R.Y. Dievendorf, Mrs. John Perring and Laura Sellmyer are in charge of arrangements for the open house.

'Twas the Night Before Christmas will be the theme for this year's December display at the Catharine V. Yost Museum, W. Water St.

estivities will begin on Sunday, Dec. 6, when both the Yost Museum and historic Jones House, 314 E. Madison St., will unveil their Christmas decorations. The Yost Museum will be open from noon to 4 p.m. and will feature historically correct Victorian Christmas decorations as well as decorations pertaining to the classic Christmas verse "A Visit from Saint Nicholas." Local pianists Mary Ann Knoll, Navana Ahrens, Paula Rosenbaum and Ellen Hoffman will be featured performing Christmas music on the home's piano. A small children's choir from St. Mary's School will be performing with Rosenbaum from 2 to 3 pm.

On Dec. 20, the Yost Museum and Jones House will both be open regular hours from 2 to 4 p.m. and will then reopen from 5 to 8 p.m. in conjunction with Pontiac's Luminaria Display. During this time at the Yost Museum, actors George, Neisha and Jordan Hibbs, and Michael and Colleen Cole will portray the Yost family as they experience "The Night Before Christmas" much as the family in the original verse did.

A special guest, Santa Claus, will be arriving via his sleigh for this display.

The Jones House and Yost Museum will be open every Sunday in December from 2 to 4 p.m. before closing for the season. They will reopen in May.

J.W. Sternickle/*Daily Lead*

Carol Howells, of the Holiday House, decorates a tree at the historic Jones House, 314 E. Madison, which will be holding its annual Christmas Open House on Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m.